IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (withdrawn) A method for fabricating a gas turbine engine combustor, said method comprising:

coupling a venturi to a primary swirler; and

coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler such that a gap is defined between a portion of the venturi and a portion of one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler.

2. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler comprises coupling the venturi to the secondary swirler such the venturi is coupled between the primary and secondary swirlers and such that a slide fit is defined between at least a portion of the venturi and a portion of one of the primary and secondary swirlers.

3. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler comprises coupling the venturi to one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler using at least one of a brazing operation and a welding operation.

4. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein one of the primary swirler and the secondary swirler defines a flow passage extending therethrough, said method further comprises forming a plurality of openings extending in flow communication between the flow passage and the gap.

5. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising coating the portion of the venturi defining the gap with a thermal barrier coating.

6. (withdrawn) A method in accordance with Claim 1 wherein coupling the venturi to a secondary swirler further comprises coupling the venturi to the secondary swirler such that the venturi extends between the primary and secondary swirlers.

7. (currently amended) A combustor for a gas turbine engine, said combustor comprising:

a venturi ~~comprising an upstream portion, a downstream portion and a middle portion extending therebetween~~; and

a secondary swirler ~~extending~~ defining an air passage circumferentially around said ~~venture~~ venturi, said secondary swirler coupled to said venturi ~~to facilitate preventing a flow of fuel between a radially inner surface of said secondary swirler and a radially outer surface of said venturi at said upstream and downstream portions,~~ such that a gap is defined between ~~said~~ a radially inner surface of said secondary swirler and ~~said~~ a radially outer surface of said venturi ~~middle portion~~, wherein at least one opening extends from said radially inner surface through said radially outer surface to direct air from said air passage into said gap.

8. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 further comprising a primary swirler coupled to said venturi such that said venturi is between said primary and secondary swirlers.

9. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 8 wherein at least a portion of said venturi is slidably coupled to a portion of one of said primary and said secondary swirlers.

10. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 8 wherein at least a portion of said venturi is coupled to a portion of one of said primary and said secondary swirlers in a slide fit, said slide fit facilitates accommodating thermal growth of at least one of said primary and said secondary swirler with respect to said venturi.

11. (canceled)

12. (previously presented) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 wherein said venturi radially outer surface comprises a layer of thermal barrier coating.

13. (original) A combustor in accordance with Claim 7 wherein said gap facilitates reducing an operating temperature of said venturi.

14. (currently amended) A gas turbine engine comprising a combustor comprising an annular air swirler and an annular venturi, ~~said annular venturi comprising an upstream portion, a downstream portion and a middle portion extending therebetween,~~ said annular air swirler defines an air passage and is coupled to said venturi ~~to facilitate preventing a flow of fuel between a radially inner surface of said annular air swirler and a radially outer surface of said annular venturi at said upstream and downstream portions,~~ such

that a gap is defined between ~~said~~ a radially inner surface of said air swirler and ~~said a~~ radially outer surface of said venturi ~~middle portion~~, wherein at least one opening extends from said radially inner surface through said radially outer surface to direct air from said air passage into said gap.

15. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates reducing an operating temperature of said venturi.

16. (previously presented) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein at least a portion of said annular air swirler is coupled in a slide fit against said venturi.

17. (canceled)

18. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates maintaining an operating temperature of said venturi below a predetermined temperature.

19. (original) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said gap facilitates reducing coking of said venturi.

20. (previously presented) A gas turbine engine in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said combustor further comprises a primary swirler, said venturi coupled between said primary swirler and said annular air swirler.